# MONICA

SAMUEL VALENTINE COLE

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# MONICA:
## *or,* THE CHRONICLE OF MARCUS

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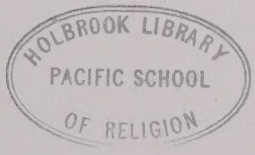
## *or,* THE CHRONICLE OF MARCUS

A POEM

Founded on the Life and Character of the
Mother of St. Augustine

BY

SAMUEL VALENTINE COLE

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# MONICA:
## *or,* THE CHRONICLE OF MARCUS

# MONICA

*A MARCO, Christi servo, scriptum,*" thus
Begins the writing, "*anno Domini*
*Quadringentesimo et*" — this line breaks off;
The book-infesting worms have eaten up
I can not say how many valuable years
With three lines more, and left the date unsaid.
"*De pulchra Monicae vita,*" it goes on,
Then stops again, leaving a wider gap.
'Tis strange, though, how the sleek omnivorous worms
Have spared to eat the beautiful life and name,
Which tower there like a mountain in the waste!
This only the inscription by some hand
Later than his who wrote the chronicle,
Although, like his, dust centuries ago.

The codex all, so long it lay forgot,
Shows gaps, dull inks, worm-burrowings, and mould;
And here and there whole leaves are torn away;
Yet through it all, to him who reads and loves,
There breaks the undying story of a life,
As through the brown dead earth the spring at last.

Whether the Marcus spoken of be he
That sang for Ambrose as the story tells,
Or be some other, I know not; I know,
Whoe'er he was, he bore the blessèd sign
And wears his crown now somewhere in God's world.

I give it as he gave it who wrote first;
Or mostly so; the gaps I leave, or bridge
With guesses only; certain other things
I take or leave as serves the purpose best.
No doubt some errors have crept in; 't were strange,
With so much mouldy Latin to explore,
If otherwise; yet in the main correct,
And in the main his also; here it is.

## PART I

I, Marcus, lest the memory of it fade,
Or lest the facts, through rumors in the church
When I am gone, be changed and something lost, —
Since I, of them who knew that face at all,
Linger on earth the latest, by God's will, —
Write on these parchment leaves the simple truth,
That when men ask if it be so or so,

And I no more can answer as my wont,
The little chronicle may speak for me.

For she was worthy; our dear Lord, who spoke
The gracious word that made a woman's deed,
As from her broken alabaster box,
Send forth a fragrance filling all the world,
Would have his followers everywhere, I think,
Remember Monica; so fair her life,
She seems scarce other than a blessèd star —
The holiest star of motherhood this world
Has ever looked on, saving only one —
Risen clear of all the shadows of her time,
Henceforth to comfort mothers in their tears,
Where'er they be, who pray for wayward sons.

Her home was in the garden of the South,
Where nearer bends the roadway of the sun,
And nearer, through the odor-laden air,
The mighty planets, brimmed with splendor, wheel.
She lived her girlhood there from bud to flower;
And when, still clinging to the parent stem,
She trembled on the ever perilous verge
Of womanhood, and seemed a lovely rose
For someone's hand to pluck and bear away,
The young Patricius, of a noble house,
Watching her pass one morning, said: "That face —

There is no other like it in the town! "
And then, so potently the vision wrought,
" There is no other in the world for me! "
But when, on due occasion, and with all
The gradual approaches to the theme,
He spoke to her and waited, she drew back:
" Nay, nay," she said, " I have another vow;"
Whereat he, half in earnest, half in sport:
" You Christians are strange people, dreaming dreams,
And seeing visions; dwelling in a realm
Of phantoms, making nought of solid things.
You see walled cities in the clouds; the air
Is full of angels flying to and fro;
The wind, of trumpets blowing; even the waves
Are dead men's voices somewhere singing psalms;
The dead are living and the living dead;
You talk of crosses, crowns, and thrones; you call
Strength weakness, weakness strength; your heads are turned
By that wild rumor flying round the world
About a man long dead — some centuries now,
I think — to come again, sit on a throne,
Turn all things upside down and inside out,
Divide the people to the right and left,
And take himself some twenty million brides.
When will it cease? "

But she — all seriousness

And like a slender birch, that, grasped and twirled
By the rough wind, holds ever the firm ground,
And, when the wind dies, straightens to its place —
Arose, freed from the volume of his talk,
And answered him, well rooted in her faith:
"Not till the world cease or my Bridegroom come."
And thereupon Patricius, with a smile:
"My words were merely putting to the test
That faith of thine, as one might test a coin
Flung on the marble, and it rings out true.
As true as is the morning to the world,
As true as mellow evening with her stars,
So true art thou to what thou holdest true.
Full well I know that all thy grace and truth
Are worthy of a worthier man than I;
Yet hast thou grown, O Monica, my life,
As dear to me as thou art true to Him.
Is there no way — there must be such, if God,
Thy God, who, as thou sayest, made all things
In love and for the purposes of love,
Would have a man seek to a woman's love,
That their two hearts henceforth may beat as one,
And their two lives, which otherwise were halves,
Round into fulness like the singing spheres —
No way whereby thou, even thou, canst love
A man on earth as well as Him in heaven,
And still remain both dear and true to both?

Think, Monica, and do not answer now;
Wait till yon golden sickle in the blue
Orbs to a shield of silver ere thou speak."

They lingered talking long into the night,
Then parted as part tide and shore when rolls
Wave after wave back like the outstretched hand
Of some one going and yet loth to go.
He was the tide and she a little isle.
The tide would come again with shining face,
And multitudinous voice, and gentle hands,
To take the little island in its arms.

. . . . . .

Change, all is change; the noiseless wheels go on;
They bring the new and bear away the old;
Live while we live; the fire is growing cold;
Nay, what will be we build our hopes upon.
O golden sickle, grow a silver shield!

Change, all is change; but who those wheels would stay?
There is no fruit until the flower is past;
And what is first serves only what is last;
When comes the best the good must give it way.
O golden sickle, grow a silver shield!

Change, all is change; the boy becomes the man;
The maid must be the woman and the wife;
You find the glory and the crown of life
In love, love only, since the world began.
O golden sickle, grow a silver shield!

Change, all is change; haste, leaden-footed hours;
Quickly, fair days, roll round your ball of light;
Move quickly, every starry-laden night;
And speed the moment, all ye heavenly powers;
O golden sickle, grow a silver shield!

. . . . . .

Patricius disappointed went his way,
But followed still hope's ever tremulous star.
And Monica pondered what was new and strange;
Husband and wifely duties — these had lain
Outside the misty boundaries of her dream,
Or only entered it as flying gleams
Of something somewhere never meant for her.
She had not risen unto that stature yet
In life's experience, or not till now,
Whence she could see beyond her girlhood's prime
The full horizon of a woman's hope.
Patricius loved her; how the world had grown
Within an hour illimitably great!
Yet even now she seemed less like herself —
A woman with a woman's life to live —
Than like that prophet-leader long ago
Who climbed alone the solemn mountain-peak
And saw a land whereto he might not come.
But might she not? Who said it might not be?
Were they so sure, and in a world like ours,
That virgin must be always more than wife?

The word, perhaps, by some one ages past
Had been misread, or misinterpreted,
And the old error handed down the years.
One thing stood fixed, — she never wavered here, —
The heavenly Bridegroom, come what might on earth,
In all her life should hold no second place,
But reign as Lord and Master till the end.
Was there a place then for Patricius too?
She held the thought, and turned it round and round,
Like some fire-hearted crystal in the dusk,
That flashes light, now this way and now that,
And howsoe'er she moved the precious thing
It kept her wishing to be "true to both."
Thus all the while, scarce knowing it herself,
The little island waited for the tide.

Again the sun's far-flaming wheel moved o'er
The world's bright edge, down-drawing after it
The folds of crimson till no shred was left;
While, burnished by invisible hands, the moon,
All silver and full-rounded to a shield,
Hung high in heaven, and the land was still.
A leaf stirred somewhere, or a fountain plashed,
Or faint far note of some lone nightingale
Floated across the shadow; that was all.

With various mood did Monica perceive
How streamed the moments toward her fateful hour.
On such a night, perhaps, her Lord had met
And overcome the Tempter in the waste.
On such a night He sweat great drops of blood—
"Ah me!" she cried, "I hear the olive-trees
Tremble in all their leaves because of Him.
On such a night can I beside that name
Set any other, though the best on earth?
Yet did He not, while tarrying with his own,
Himself once bless a happy bride and groom?
And many a time, by gracious look and word,
Bless little children in their mothers' arms?
And always, without where to lay his head,
Bless, yearningly, dear Son of Man, my Lord,
That full-orbed love which centres in the home?
Whatever love is anywhere is part,
If rightly known, of all the love there is,
As branch of vine; draws from the whole its life,
Is like the whole, lives, throbs, makes sacrifice,
Gives to the uttermost, and can not die.
Surely, the Love that made the world at all,
Made in that world the need and pain of love,
And made for it at last a woman's heart.
May not the love that bindeth man and maid,
Though partly blind, yet wholly make for good?
Is Christ less, or another only more?

Is not Christ more, the more we love on earth?
We love so little, that perchance is why
The Lord delays; yet ever must we watch.
A wife may win her husband to the church;
Then will two purposes to the same end move,
Two voices praise where praised but one before,
And others follow, and the kingdom grow.
O me! how arguments like armèd men
Spring from the ground to help us in our wish!
What shall I answer when Patricius comes? "

So reasoned this pure spirit, seeming still
Unto herself to doubt, nor knew her heart
Already had made answer; it was well;
The bishop too had said it would be well,
And God's great angel, in the Book of Deeds
And Motives, added, writing, " It is well."

When therefore fell a footstep on the stone,
And, through the suddenly swinging oaken valves,
A face broke in upon her from the night,
Her thoughts, like legionaries when they hear
The signal ring out from the clarion's throat,
No more ran separate ways, but all closed in
As for a common purpose, and obeyed.
She rose, self-poised, and tall, and beautiful,
The faint trace of a smile upon her face,
And stretched the hand of welcome, speaking low.

Patricius ran the lover's gamut through,
Harped on each string, made promises and vows,
Painted with easy stroke the future days
In all the colors of the Northern Dawn:
She still could worship, morn or evening hour;
All hours upon the Lord's Day if she chose;
All days in Holy Week — he would not mind —
Keep every fast and feast the whole year through;
She should be Christian; he stay what he was,
Or grow to something better; time would tell;
He knew the old gods were as dead as stones;
They should have died — he said it — long before;
A set of rascals, gourmands, busybodies;
Her God had better manners; that was plain;
Christian or pagan, was not love the same?
His love was something — he felt sure it was —
Not theological, nor logical,
But what love always had been and would be;
Had she decided, let her speak the word.

Then calm and resolute she said: "I have;
My mind is fixed; I can not alter it;
I can not answer other than I do:
The One I spake of half a month ago,
Being still the same, shall hold no second place,
But reign as Lord and Master till the end."
"Then wilt thou give it me," Patricius cried,
"That second place? I do not ask for more."

The balance wavered — as it seemed to him,
Not knowing — wavered and dropped; the star-
light all
Broke into crimson sunrise on her cheek;
As when a hand, held out of reach, at last
Unclasping, lets a splendid jewel fall,
So fell from those warm lips into his ear,
And trembled to his heart and made it throb,
That syllable, which, in the lover's world,
Hath power to change this earth to heaven —
"Yes."

So they were married. That was when the bloom
Lay on the land, and balm breathed in the air;
Merely to live seemed good. They built their
home
Upon a gradual slope of emerald-green
That rose, beyond, into a crown of rock
At the town's edge against the southern sky.
Midway the slope, yet nearer to the town,
A little tree-girt garden, filled with flowers,
Embosomed one small house; that was their
home,
So far as home is visible to men's eyes.
For home consists not of mere sheltering walls,
Of columns of marble even, paintings, books,
Grounds, statues, silver fountains — not of these;
Nor of the more or less of things like these;

Palace or lowliest hut, it matters not;
The roof dull earth, a tree-branch, open sky;
The lamp a star; the hearth a glowworm's fire
Amid the night-cold grass, — it matters not:
Home is not bought for gold, or built with hands,
Or made of aught in all this world but love:
Home is where love is. That, then, was their home;
There softly by rolled all the golden days,
While the long season slipped from flower to frost.
It almost seems as if the spheres themselves
Let fall at times, around a home like that,
Their music, seldom elsewhere heard on earth.

It might have been so always but for him —
His passionate heart: Patricius had his moods,
And when the mood was on him he was changed
As from the low-voiced ripple of the tide
Into a billow thundering at the crag.
The young wife, frightened at first, soon learned a power
Lodged in her soul, greater than power of tongue
Or tears: her meekness shone upon his wrath,
Like the calm starlight on a furious sea,
And conquered it, and all the tumult fell.
Then would he ask forgiveness, call her true,
And the old music for a time crept back.

Why strive we thus?
'Tis either thou or I,
When silently the stream of years has run
A little nearer where all years are done,—
'Tis thou or I who will let fall the tear
Upon the other's bier.

Why speak we thus?
'Tis either thou or I,
When thick the praises of the world are shed
Some day upon the other's fallen head,—
'Tis thou or I, in all the world of men,
Who will speak kindest then.

Why feel we thus?
'Tis either thou or I,
Yes, when the hour comes that will come at last,
And one sits dreaming of a vanished past,—
'Tis thou or I whose heart with love will break
All for the other's sake.

. . . . . .

But repetition, though forgiven, leaves
Things other than they were before; in time
It wore a little hollow in her heart,
And drew a little cloud across her sky,
And laid a little burden on her life.
Prayer was her solace; oft in lonely hours
She clomb the green slope to its rocky crown
To pray and meditate above the world.

Behind, the vast white desert burned away;
On either hand the gates of dawn or eve,
Standing between us and the shining flood
That beats upon our world, swung in and out
In awful silence on their hinge of gold.
To northward, in the proper slant of light,
Across the level of a thousand roofs,
She saw the glimmer and tremble of the blue
With white sails on it gliding to and fro.
But oftener would she peer into the realm
Of heaven's pure unfathomable deep
And watch a fleck of cloud, now here, now there,
As if to see it break into a host
Of powerful angels marching on the world
With Christ and his apostles; then she sighed,
"His 'little while' has grown to 'long ago'."

But longer yet that 'little while' must grow,
And heavier lie her burden; all too soon
Dark whisperings floated upward from the town;
The man whom she had loved as her own soul,
Was seeking elsewhere earthlier love than hers
And walking in the wanton pagan ways.
At first she doubted, but when knowledge came
It smote a chill through her warm loyal blood;
Till, suddenly, she heard, or seemed to hear,
A voice from somewhere syllable her name,
And half in speech and half in music say:

"The Father too, does He not see and hear?
And seems He far who dwells so very near?
Fear not, my child, there is no need to fear.

"The days may darken and the tempest lower;
Their power is nothing to the Father's power;
Lift up thy heart and watch with me this hour."

Then, after pausing, brake the voice again:

"The Shepherd loves and seeks the straying
Sheep;
Them that are His He must forever keep;
O, dry thine eyes, there is no need to weep.

"Though night falls round Him and cold rains
are blown,
And bleak the hills, He searches still alone,
And search He must until He find His own."

She saw no vision as the breath of air,
Articulate with so sweet a sound, passed by.
"Surely," she said, "that was a friendly word,"
And in the help of it her heart and strength
Came back a little. That same afternoon,
Reclining on her hill-crown underneath
An oak-tree, in the drowsy sound of leaves,
And pondering of the past and of her doubt —
If it were well that she had wed at all —
She slept and dreamed; and in her dream there
fell
A splendor round her, in the midst of which,

As silent and as gracious as the dawn,
There stood a tall white angel with a book,
Who, opening, showed the writing, "It is well."
Whereat awaking comforted she cried:
"Such voices and such visions come from God,
And powers be round us that we know not of.
It were a shame, with heaven's help so near,
To doubt, and faint, and fail, and not to trust."
Then of Patricius with a throbbing heart:
"He is my husband; let my troth remain;
Nor false in him shall kill the true in me;
I must not leave him; I am still his wife;
For better or for worse I will be true."

The next Lord's Day the bishop chanced to preach
Of patience tenderly; he looked at her
As if the thoughts within her were all seen
Like tear-drops in a crystal; he explained
How sorrow is the chastener of our life,
The test and proof of it; makes purer still,
As fire does gold, and truer, and more fit
To share at last the radiant stainlessness
Of God's great life; blessèd are they that mourn.
She, needing less than others such a power
To touch and change her, found it more than most,
Until her soul grew strong and almost more
Than human — so it seemed to those who knew.

Henceforth, in whatsoever lot she was,
She met her trials as a brave life should;
Used all experience for the nobler ends;
Kept faith in love; and ever in mind and heart
Rose taller, lovelier, lonelier, through the year —
Nearer to heaven and therefore not alone —
To tower at last, among all womankind,
As some far Alp above the lesser hills
At evening in its robe of fire and snow.

That was not yet; full many a time must roll
The great slow circle round with gleam and gloom;
The Dog burn through his season overhead;
The Hunter lift and lower his shining club;
Fair Pleione's weeping daughters set aflame,
In the clear East, their seven silver lamps
And quench them in the far Hesperian wave.

A second time the year was sloping down;
That burst of life which follows after frost,
With bud and whirring wing, had long gone by;
The streams lay shrunken into threads; the birds
Had builded, reared their broods, and passed away;
The bright flowers fallen and left the ripening fruit;
The quiet end of summer, reft of bloom,

Now glided noiseless into fall of leaf,
And life from all things slowly seemed to ebb.

Not so with Monica; a change had come;
The fall of leaf meant bud and song to her;
Life mounted up; she felt a warmth and glow
Like that of coming summer in her veins;
For, blessèd among women, she rejoiced
That God had chosen her to become a link
In life's great chain — help shape another life
For earth and an immortal soul for heaven.
Her heart leaped in her; when November came,
Hung his thick cloud aloft, shook down the rain,
O'erswept the sea with many a roughening wind,
And brought her near the fulness of the days,
An awe fell on her spirit like the hush
Preceding sunrise in far northern lands.
Forgotten were all troubles; for a time
She felt no more a hollow in her heart,
And, when the child was born, it seemed at last
As if the cloud broke and a star stepped forth
As herald of a holier happier day.

"Poor little waif," Patricius pitying said,
And took the child a moment in his arms,
"The cruel waves have cast thee on these shores,
Thee, little one, torn from what passing ship?"
"Nay, nay, dear husband," the young mother
cried,

"No waif, this child, my child and thine and
God's;
Say angel rather, messenger, one sent,
Clothed with strange power and honor, like to
them
Whom the Imperial Caesar often sends
To bear to distant Provinces his word.
The message comes to me and thee from God;
Let us give audience, reverence the child,
His messenger august." Patricius smiled,
"Forsooth, then, why not call him Augustine?"
"Even so," she answered gladly, "let the name
Remind us both of Him who rules the world."

And she was happy. All her mother's-heart
Went toward the child; Patricius might not
mend;
Old hopes had fallen to ruins; but the child,
The child would grow and gather strength and
power,
And bear the sign and sword of Holy Church;
Warrior of Christ — for so he should be trained —
To fight the Church's battles and to lay
A crown of glory on her; that were well.
At times when Monica foresaw the years
In dream, and all around her was a dream,
There seemed to creep a strange cloud overhead,
Dragging its shadow straight upon her path,

And following when she would have moved
away.
She could not flee the shadow; but it passed,
It always passed, and left the evening clear.
Though full of faith, for every fear or doubt
She clasped the child the closer in her arms.
And she was happy, as she kept the home
With gracious art, and cared for that young life,
And loved it, singing tender mother-songs.

. . . . . .

O Mary, pardon, if my joy be wild;
Thou too wert mother, let thy blame be mild;
O Mother, love a mother with her child.

Thou knowest well that little lips are sweet,
And little arms and little hands and feet;
Thy heart and mine above the child can meet.

O Mary, pardon me my foolish fears;
They come at times when I forecast the years;
Thou too hast wept, forgive a mother's tears.

Alas, for what to thy dear Child was done,
Alas, alas! Guard thou my precious one;
O Mother, love a mother with her son.

## PART II

How beautiful are beginnings whence the light
Forth-glimmers of more beautiful things to be!
The bud is beautiful that brings the rose;
The star that leads the silvery-armored host
Through God's blue fields; the dawn that strips the folds
Of shadows off, with fingers dipt in fire,
And opens out the glory of the day.
And beautiful is childhood, centering so
All possibilities, while no one knows
What meaning slumbers in the new-born life
As bud, or star, or morning for the world!
Thus Monica, forgetting all the past,
Dwelt partly in the present, partly roamed
The golden-hearted future with her child,
Until the world seemed beautiful indeed,
So full of visions and of beckoning hands!

The months tripped by, soft-sandaled; the child grew,
Beginning to distinguish self from things,
And things from things, and then the difference learn
'Twixt 'can' and 'can't', 'twixt 'will' and 'won't,' and show
Dislikes and likes, and frame sweet syllables,

And rule the household; it was said he took
The word of Christ in with his mother's milk.
The years, too, in their quiet way slipped by.
And now the lad, all eyes and ears, would find
In commonest objects what seemed new and strange.
His heart burned full of wonder; everything
He wondered at and questioned, — the sky's blue,
The turning spheres, the pulsing of the sea,
The life that bursts the acorn, in the grape
The changing of the water into wine;
Old customs, too, opinions, everything;
What stood secure, or seemingly secure,
Built on and built around by the beliefs
Of ages, even this he flinched not from,
But drove at with his why, and how, and when,
And, Is it certain? and, Where lies the proof?
Accepted nothing; all things must be proved.
"The boy's top-heavy, runs to intellect,"
Some wise ones said; but other some replied,
"Experience gives the ballast; that will come."
Patricius, caring more for cleverness
Than goodness, as at times a parent will,
Exclaimed, one day, "'Tis in him, Monica,
'Tis in him, and, if books will bring it out,
And schools and teachers, he shall have them all,
And make his mark, and be of them who know."

But sighed the heart of that dear mother: "Would
He were of them, the rather, who believe."
For, having prayed and waited all these years,
She listened to hear the first sweet note of faith
Break from his heart — the faith that sang in
hers —
As one might listen beside a glorious wood,
But listen in vain because no bird is there.

And other years, quiet and solemn, passed,
While Monica, with many a tear, perceived
How the lad's bent seemed all away from her
And what she loved, away from the dear church,
And toward the pride and folly of the world.
True, he loved truth; but, for truth's steadfast
star,
Mistook the star that swims above the fen,
And draws God's heedless and unwary ones
To miry footings where ofttimes they sink.
His school life — that seemed like a wasted field,
So broken in upon and trampled down
At many a point by youth's unreined desires.
O me! his wild companions and the streets
And courtesans of Carthage — what a tale!
These were the years that laid across her path
A stretch of desert, barren of all save hope;
Surrender that she could not; 'twas her life;
For, as a caravan, spent with heat and thirst,

Sees far off, near the burning level's marge,
Or thinks it sees, a beautiful grove of palms,
Fed by cool water-springs and rich with shade,
Sees, and takes heart again, and travels on,
So she, brave soul, drew comfort from the dreams
Impalpable that hover round our world,
And from the voices singing in the wind,
And held toward happier things her steadfast way.

In these same years the shadow which men fear
Fell for the first time on her home and heart:
Patricius died. But, surely, there was that
Which made it not all shadow; at the last
He hoped; his hope came suddenly like a star.
Long since he had abandoned, one by one,
His pagan ways, grown gentler, taken on
A Christian's bearing almost, so men said;
And always, everywhere he went, he heard
The voice that follows after, crying, "Come!"
But this they knew not; as a cloud that holds
Its dark side toward the earth, but cherishes
Within its breast a heart of golden fire,
Then thinner grows and thinner, till it lets
The gold fire forth just as the day is done,
So seemed his life; 'twas glorious at the end.
And yet they dreamed not of the end, because
He tarried, serving, for a time; then came

Upon his face one day the peace of God,
And in the light of it he fell asleep.

. . . . . .

The world, I thought, belonged to me —
Goods, gold, and people, land and sea —
Where'er I walked beneath God's sky,
In those old days, my word was "I."

Years passed: there flashed my pathway near
The fragment of a vision dear;
My former word no more sufficed,
And what I said was — "I and Christ."

But, O, the more I looked on Him
His glory grew, while mine grew dim:
I shrank so small, He towered so high,
All I dared say was — "Christ and I."

Years more the vision held its place
And looked me steadily in the face;
I speak now in a humbler tone,
And what I say is — "Christ alone."

. . . . . .

Thereafter, rich in memory, rich in hope,
The faithful Monica walked her widowed way.
The Lord was kind to her, vouchsafing dreams
And visions. One rememberable day
She called her son and said to him: "Hear my
dream;

It lingers as low music in my ears,
The faded light of it falls round my feet.
God speaks in dreams ofttimes; perhaps in this;
It comforts me to think so. Wilt thou hear?
I watched thee, son — thou didst not know I saw —
At Easter, when the white-robed happy ones
Passed, singing, and the tear stood in thine eye.
That day I lingered longer than my wont
Over the blessed Rolls. I read and read again
How that the Lord's great train and glory filled
The Temple; and I read what John wrote too
In his Apocalypse of things to be.
The hour was late when I lay down and slept,
And, lo, a glorious angel touched my eyes.
'Fear not,' he said, 'thy prayers are heard in heaven.
The Master bids thee visit that great church
Across the sea; kneel where the holy lamps,
All gold, reflected in the marble floor
As in still water, burn through calm or storm
Round the Apostle's tomb: pray also there,
And ponder well what thou shalt see and hear.'
When he had vanished, I arose and went,
Borne by swift wings in some mysterious way.
I seemed unburdened of all earthly weight,
As spirit only in the pure cool air.

The broad stream of the waters under me
Glimmered in starshine; islands, mountains, clumps
Of forest, beautiful levels, and the homes of men
I passed, till, just as morning's golden beam
Fell on the world, I dropped as lightly down,
As might a feather from an eagle's wing,
At the church portal; and I entered in.
But what a change! it was not morning there.
The people groped about in dusk and gloom,
Asking for light, and no man gave it them;
The holy lamps were flickering or gone out;
Decay had eaten deep into the walls;
And through the framework of the mighty pile,
Once strong and beautiful, a tremor ran
As from an earthquake's footfall somewhere near,
And people said, 'The end is coming on;'
When, suddenly, I heard a trumpet blow,
And then a voice cry, 'Who will save my church?'
A hush fell on all tongues; but soon there rose
A whisper, 'He needs be as great and good
As Paul or Peter or beloved John
To save the church at such a time as this.'
A second time the trumpet and the voice
Pealed forth undaunted: 'Who will save my church?'
Then went another whisper through the throng,

Chilling the life-blood of Christ's faithful ones:
'Jove once was king; his turn came and he went.
The Nazarene is going; each one goes;
For gods wear out, like clothes, and must be changed.'
Again the powerful trumpet tore the air
Even to the four ends of earth and heaven,
And the voice thundered, 'Who will save my church?'
An awful stillness followed; not a whisper now;
Till faint, far off, as from beyond the world,
Response came, 'Here am I, but what am I?
I am not worthy, Lord, else would I come.'
Whereat the great voice quickly answered, 'Come.'
Then that far faint one, 'Lord, I will obey.'
It was as if a wandering breath of God
Struck suddenly now along the dying lamps,
Rekindling them, and light brake all round.
The lofty roof branched farther yet toward heaven,
And farther, till it overarched the stars:
And, by the same sweet miracle, the walls
Drew silent back, embracing the wide earth.
Then rolled a hymn, full-voiced, through nave and aisle;
'Yea, Christ is risen, is risen; his servant comes:
Thomas has doubted, but he doubts no more.'

"Listen, my son, thou hast not heard the whole:
After the hymn there came a rustling sound,
Like waters rolling backward, fold on fold;
All eyes upon a sudden turned one way,
And some one cried, 'Make way, make way for him
Whom Christ hath chosen to save and build his church:'
They parted, right and left, as did the waves
Of Jordan when the holy ark went by;
Down the long aisle of faces passed a man;
His face I saw not, over all their heads;
He passed, and there was silence while he knelt,
Amid the lamps beside the altar, and confessed,
Speaking aloud his sin in that great church,
Great as the world and full of listening ears.
When he arose, so fair, and strong, and tall,
And, covered with a glorious golden beam
Out of the roof, stood on the altar steps
A moment, with his face turned toward us all,
I saw indeed; behold, that face was thine!
O Augustine, thou canst not flee from God;
O Augustine, my son, thou wilt not flee;
For twice already has the trumpet blown
In thy young life: once when the friend who walked
So close beside thee passed into the light,
And once when thy dear father fell asleep.

A third remains: it may be blowing soon;
What wilt thou answer to the voice of Christ? "
But Augustine was silent, and, with heart
Stirred by her words, arose and broke away.

At last the time came when the young man's heart
Turned Romeward; he would touch the central life,
And mix his spirit with the springs of power,
And be a part of that which reaches forth
To grasp and hold and moderate the world.
"Mother," he said, "Maxentius goes to Rome,
And asks if I will follow; wouldst thou mind? "
"My son," she cried, "speak not that fatal word;
Or not so soon. I feared it; for I knew
Thy power and thy ambition; they require
The wider field; thy mind is like a sword,
Polished and keen; but, O my son, thy heart,
Thy heart is not yet ready, no, not yet.
This Rome, to them that follow and believe,
To them that follow and are of the Way,
Is heaven's own gateway; it is holy ground.
But unto others — and, alas! dear son,
Thou still art of the others — this same Rome,
So steeped with pride and Babylonian sin,
Proves the abyss, whereunto rush the streams
Of evil from the ends of all the earth;

They make of it a roaring pool of death;
The soul that falls therein is lost for aye;
In Rome thou wouldst be lost to Christ indeed,
And lost to thy poor mother weeping here."
"Nay, mother," he continued, "think not so;
Thou art too serious with thyself and me;
Life's burdens weigh down heavier than they are
When one piles over them his doubts and fears.
I am not gone; see, this is solid flesh
And bones; no phantom; I am with thee still!
Nothing on earth has power to wrest a son
From such a mother, whatsoever comes.
Listen! within three days the Castor sails;
My friend sails in her; I would see him off;
Tomorrow I must journey to the shore."

She looked on him, as only a mother could —
Foreboding imminent harm; for suddenly
There leaped a doubt before her mind, and grew,
And laid its cold hand round about her heart,
And made her tremble: Would he also go?
Was this his way of saying he must go?
She ran far back in memory to the hour
When, in that early trouble of her life,
He came to her a golden star of hope.
Throughout these years, whatever else he was,
Or then or now, he was all that to her.
The trials of a life-time had fled by,

One after one like shadows on a field
In April when the light breaks out again
Between them, since her hope shone back of all.
Take that away and what a life were hers!
Could it be possible the end was near?
Rome meant the end; the golden light hung low.
Therefore she looked on him, and, pausing long,
Replied, "Thou journeyest to the shore, my son?
Ay, all of us are journeying to the shore,"
And with that word she turned aside and wept.

There is a place on the Numidian coast,
Where, with its multitudinous wave, the sea
Has wrought upon the land this many a year
And hollowed it into a beautiful bay.
The inmost bend lies white with glittering sand;
And there the shore looms highest, for two knolls
Rise, side by side, far sloping from the fields
Behind them, through a wilderness of leaves.
They bore, each on its rocky summit, once
A little chapel with a little cross,
And, in the quiet of the place, the twain
Thus lifted heavenward seemed like palms of
prayer.
One held the shrine of Cyprian, where long since
That blessed martyr fell asleep in Christ,
And one was sacred to all other names
Written with blood there in the Book of Life.

The holy walls, not fallen to ruin yet,
Were overgrown with moss and hung with vines
Wherein the birds loved well to build their homes.
Those chapels had the reverence of all men;
But Cyprian's was the older, and the steps
That led to it were well-nigh worn away;
Its door responded lightly to the touch
Of pilgrim, or of casual passer-by;
And many a prayer of many a pious heart,
By day and night, wrapped round with odors sweet
And with the voices of the sea and wood,
Ascended still like incense to God's throne.
An aged woman formerly kept the place
For love of serving; and it was her wont
To leave at night a candle near each shrine,
Where it might also send its light abroad.
And not more faithfully did the great Twin Stars
Themselves watch over all the lonely deep
Than those two candles watched the little bay.

One afternoon — near Cyprian's day, I think —
The aged woman, bustling at her work,
Sat trimming the two lamps with special care
Outside the door, and, as her wont, let fall
A slender ripple of music from her lips,
Which bare the words half-merged in it along,
As oft a brook, in autumn, golden leaves;
And thus the words, swept in the ripple, ran:

"Shine, little lamp, shine over bay and bar;
What matters it thou art not sun or star?
Some light thou hast, and light in dark shines
far:
Shine on the world until the dawn of day.

"Shine, little lamp; when weary eyes shall mark
How faithfully thou liftest up thy spark,
O, they will know the world is not all dark:
Shine for the world: there's comfort in thy ray.

"Shine, little lamp: and happy shouldst thou be!
I would I were a little lamp like thee,
And, shining here or far out on the sea,
Help burn the shadows of the world away!

"Shine, little lamp: I give thee oil to shine:
Oil, oil I need in this poor heart of mine;
Ay, faith, more faith — that is the oil divine:
Faith gives us power to shine and to obey.

"O Father God, make me a lamp to stand
With thy dear lamps that keep the great com-
mand;
Pour oil in me, trim me with thy own hand:
I too would shine the utmost that I may."

So sang the aged dame, while tree and vine,
Alive with many a wing of bird or bee,
Sang round her, in the waning of the day.
It was an hour of splendor in the skies
And on the earth; the sun's long lances smote
Athwart the world, and in upon the wood

Where they were shattered, till the air seemed full
Of glancing lights and flying bits of gold
Which, falling, clung to rock or leaf or branch;
When slowly came two travelers up the path,
Unheard until their footsteps left the sward
And touched the sloping ledge; whereat, surprised,
The trimmer of the lamps turned suddenly round,
And looked, and rose and lifted up her hands;
"What! Monica, my friend! can it be thou?
My heart is glad," she cried, "and this, perhaps,
Is that tall son of thine? "

'Twas even so.
For, on the morrow of their talk of Rome,
Had he set forth; and Monica, the cords
That bound her to him pulling at her heart,
Had risen and followed, and, by very chance,
O'ertaken him, while he tarried by the way.
At first he urged her vehemently back,
And then tried sweet persuasion; but in vain.
What power of words is any power at all
Against the purpose in a mother's heart?
He bade her — finally, since the hour was late —
Take rest in Cyprian's Chapel till the dawn,
When, having visited his friend on board,
He would rejoin her for the journey home.

Therefore, with faces sobered from within
And played o'er from without by all those lights,
They clomb the steep.
"Yes, Marcia, it is I,"
Said Monica, "and thou hast guessed my son.
All here seems very peaceful; as we came,
We heard thy lamp-song; it was sweet and true;
'Tis oil we need, oil, every one of us."
She sighed and fell to thinking. Then again:
"But, Marcia, I would tarry here the night,
If thou art willing; Augustine has friends."
"Christ bless thee, dear," that other made reply,
"Thou blessest us; mark how the little birds
Bubble with joy to look on thee once more.
We entertain, not always unawares,
Angels on earth. Go in, and rest, and stay."
"O Marcia, I'm no angel," answered she,
Smiling; and then they entered, mother and son,
That hospitable door, but soon passed out,
She saying to Marcia, "Thou wilt see me back."
They took a path that wound down through the glen;
It speedily let them forth upon the sand
That rimmed the burnished levels of the bay.

Lo, sun and moon hung now at even poise
In the great scales of heaven; soon the one
Weighed heavier, and the other mounted slow,

While round the sky and on the sea the lights
Kept changing in their beautiful color play.
A vessel, motionless, and like a bird
With folded wings, lay on the wave far out.
"He must be late, or early, or else I,"
Said Augustine; but, presently, a boat
Pushed round the cliff and made for where they stood.
It touched the strand just as the sun went down.
Then, Augustine, kissing his mother's lips,
Said, "Till the dawn," and, as he stepped aboard,
"Look, Marcia's lamps are twinkling through the leaves."
And so he left her; a low creeping mist,
Mixt with the fallen shadow, seemed to draw
The boat into itself, absorbing it,
The voices and the dying sound of oars,
Till all grew mist and shadow as she watched.

"O sad strange world," she murmured, and, with fears
Beating like fluttered creatures in her heart,
Reclomb alone the pathway to the shrine.
All night she kept her vigils, praying much:
"O Father, do not let this vessel sail,
Let not thy winds blow yet — till he return."
Twice through the tree-tops passed a sudden breath,

Descending on the sea; then all was still.
But after midnight rose a gentle wind
Which blew an hour, and with it rose her care.
When, finally, the mighty beam of dawn,
Growing in heaven, began to light the earth,
Again she stood upon the lonely shore.
A breeze moved through the tents of clinging mist,
And tore and tossed them, with invisible hands,
Into a thousand silvery-shining veils,
Opening a path of vision; and, behold,
The ship was gone! The world for her that hour
Became as ere God said, "Let there be light";
The lamp of God, which in her heart no storm
Had touched, seemed fallen forever from its place;
It was as if a fearful sea of cloud
Rolled suddenly on the blazing heart of day,
Quenching it, and the ancient stars were dead.
She turned at last, wound through the shadowy glen
And up the slope, in utter loneliness.
"O, Marcia, I have lost my son, my son,"
She cried, "my son, and he deceived me too;
Ay, 'Till the dawn', — those were his very words."
The startled Marcia, throwing up her hands,
As usual, exclaimed, "What didst thou say?"

"Gone, he is gone! I said the ship was gone;
He with it. Rome, O cruel Rome, more dire
To hapless souls that fall within her grasp
Than all the rabid mouths of Scylla, or
The roaring gulfs of fell Charybdis are
To mariners who try the narrow Straits!"
"Comfort thee, dear," broke in the aged friend,
"Is not God there?" "True, Marcia," she replied,
"True, God is there and here and everywhere;
I know the Scripture; but thou dost not know,
Nor any soul on earth can ever know,
How I have stormed with prayer the gate of heaven,
Till now it seems, I mean it almost seems,
That is, I fear it almost seems to seem,
As if God thundered down to me, and said,
'This shall not be, child; trouble me no more.'"

She paused for breath a moment then went on:
"A small thing, dost thou think it, thus to pray
For ten long years, saying, 'Father, keep these steps,
These little footsteps, sure; O Shepherd Christ,
Bring thou this tender lamb into thy fold,'
To pray and wait and hear no word from heaven?
Then ten years more, ten after ten, I prayed,
Morn, noon, and night, and still no sign at all.

And after this — O, dost thou mind how long? —
Ten others, think, ten after ten twice o'er,
While people smile, and pity, and some say,
'Her heaven is closed, perhaps, and God away.'
And all these years, each day, three times each day,
Has he, that beareth heavenward all men's prayers,
Laid mine down at the throne, saying each time —
Or must, I think, from weariness have said —
'The same words, Lord, from that same woman.' Ah,
I wear the angels out and trouble God!
Now comes the fourth ten; I am praying yet;
I shall not finish them; my hair is grey;
Weeping has spread a dimness o'er these eyes;
An aching heart beats into rest at last.
But oh, my son, how can I leave my son,
My hope, my star, the glory of my dream,
Not knowing if my sweet dream be true or false,
Not knowing if my dear son will turn and live,
And help the church, or perish in his sin! "

She swooned and all her strength slipped from her, as
The wave of crystal from a vase o'erthrown.
But Marcia, with the kindliness of years
And much experience, ministered to her,

And brought her to herself, and chafed her hands,
And poured the balm of comfortable words,
Showing the brighter side if such there were.
That day she spent with Marcia, and the night;
For, like a solitary sunbeam thrown
Across a chamber, gleamed the thought: "Perhaps
Some chance detains him, and he is not gone."
Thus we, poor human kind, beguile our hearts,
By giving them the semblance for the truth.

Hour followed hour; again the heavens fell
In glory; after, veered the wind around
And, from the great sky-caverns of the north,
Tumbled the billowy clouds forth on the wind;
The black drops filled the darkness; then there came
A wailing in the air and on the shore;
The winds seemed nothing other than the sighs
Of all the mothers that had lived on earth;
The waves were their accumulated tears.
As midnight neared and passed, the storm roared forth
Its loudest, seeming with black monstrous hands
To grasp and shake the pillars of the world.
And Monica, then thinking of the ship
Far off and tossed, which bare, for aught she knew,

The last of all her hopes, and dearest, sank
In pain upon her knees, crying aloud:
"If thou indeed hast not forgot our world,
O Father, but art pitiful to them
In peril, fold thy wings about my child;
If still, O Christ thy hand hath power to save,
Walk thou this night the billow as of old."
Scarce had she ended when a low strange voice
Dropped suddenly from the rough heart of the
storm,
More sweet in all that wild environment
Than voice of thrush deep in a savage wood:
"Endure, endure, and fear not, it is I."

. . . . . .

The night is dark: the light comes by and by;
The night is darkest when the dawn is nigh;
The eyes that watch will see the shadows fly:
Patience, dear heart, until the day awake.

The stormy wind roars through the hollow sky;
Faint not, fail not, the stormy wind will die;
O, do not fail like those who do not try:
Bend, if you must, dear heart, but do not break.

The waters foam, the waves of life run high;
All the world-voices round us wail and cry;
Strange shapes arise — but fear not, it is I:
Endure, O heart of woman, for my sake.

. . . . . .

She saw no face or motion, and no gleam
Of garment, as the sweet voice died away.
"Surely," she thought, "that was no earthly voice."
The great cloud which had rolled so gloomily in
Betwixt her soul and God dragged by at last;
Her calmer thoughts pricked through again like stars,
And there was awe, then comfort, in her heart.
And now the winds slunk back into their dens,
Yelping and growling, but with lessening force;
The uproar dwindled to a murmur, then
To silence — save the trouble in the waves;
And, when through those great windows of the east
The dawn streamed in, the world seemed made anew.

Then Monica, with a happier tone, addressed
Her hostess-friend: "O Marcia, such a night!
And such a voice! I'm glad I could not sleep,
Else had I missed it; such a voice it was!
I never yet had heard its like on earth.
The comfort of it! Marcia, dost thou know
Who passed this way while walking in the storm?
Mark what the voice said: 'Fear not, it is I.'
Who, think, but One could speak a word like that?

Think! He was moving near me all the while,
Working his plan out, wielding his great power
Against the demons; suffering, as he wrought,
In patience, knowing that the end was sure,
And only asked that I be patient too."
Then, gazing where the plowshare of the storm
Had furrowed up the watery plain, she said:
"I know not if the gulfs have swept him down,
Or if he lives, and God has other plans."

"True, true," responded Marcia musingly,
"God's plans and ours are different oftentimes.
Though aiming toward one goal. His plans are best.
I had a grandson once; I have him now,
The little Marcus, changed from what he was,
Thank heaven! — the Marcus that seemed only lost.
This did not happen; it was in the plan;
Not mine, and not his mother's; only God's.
The boy loved music; well, that were not bad;
We all love music: but what Marcus loved
Was pagan airs, light catches, drinking songs,
And not the holy music of our hymns.
His voice was rich; he had a master-gift
For playing the sweet pipes. This won him friends,

Who lured him to their feasts to play and sing
Among the idols — O, my daughter's son!
His mother wept, as thou art weeping now,
And prayed the gift might go; it did not go;
It grew the more, and pleased the pagan heart;
Until one day his singing caught the ear
Of Ambrose, preacher of the blessed truth,
Who writes great hymns, they say, and sings himself.
He sought the boy out, spoke a pleasant word,
Not condescendingly, but as a friend
And brother — such is always the right way —
Then asked him to his home and to his church.
What followed? Why, in three months' time or less
The lad was changed, grown serious, and installed
As leader of the music, where, of all
The holy places on this earth, they most
Do worship God and his dear Son with song.
There is no power, believe me, in this world
More sure than some good man's to touch young life
And mould it evermore to noble ends."

But Monica's thoughts were wandering far away
Amid the loneliness of alien towns,
Till, starting from her reveries, she replied:
"Yet must I pray; life were not life to me,

But only waste and desert without prayer.
I wonder not that men so often pray;
The marvel is, that they should ever cease.
Streams breathe their vapors upward to the skies,
Flowers their incense, birds their song; so should
The hearts of men in prayer their faith and love.
Prayer gives the weakest what the Strongest has;
Binds them in one — even my poor life and His.
It is by prayer, amid life's boisterous wave,
We grasp and hold the outstretched hand of God;
By prayer we touch the blessed skirts of Christ,
And take the virtue into us from him.
And I must pray until my lamp go out,
Until the angel, taking my last prayer,
Shall take me too, and lead me through the gate,
And say, as one released from a long task,
'This is that woman, Lord, who prayed so much.'"

She spoke, and found a balm in her own words.
Then, having broken bread and bidden adieu,
She rose, in the serenity of strength,
This woman, full of sorrow, full of faith,
And homeward took her solitary way.

## PART III

That day, and all the days henceforth, she walked
A little softlier through the world; it seemed
As if, somehow, the voice might break again —
From cloud or wind, perhaps — ere she was 'ware;
At almost any turning in the path
She might come suddenly on that blessed Face
So longed-for in the world but seen no more;
All ground was holy ground; all sights and sounds, —
Lily or bird or rustling tree, — to her
Betokened the presence of a Hand, a Heart,
That only waited for the veil to drop,
And show, behind this life, the Life indeed.
Now more than ever, therefore, as she moved
Among her neighbors, did she give herself
To gentle ministries and deeds of love,
Reaching the help out to God's helpless ones,
Becoming, as aforetime, hands and feet
To such as had no power to toil or go;
Eyes to the blind, a conscience to the weak,
And voice, in all that neighborhood, to them
That knew not how to pray but only loved;
A gracious presence, like a beam of light
Sent from a mirror's face, now here, now there.

And when she felt her own grief welling up,
She held it back, repeating in her mind,
"I will be patient for the Voice's sake."

The days ran into weeks, and then the weeks
Rounded a month out; but no word from Rome;
Till, as she watched one night, beside her door,
The red sun sink, there came from Hannibal, —
The merchant, having ships on all the seas, —
A swarthy-visaged slave, born by the Nile,
Who bowed, and laid a packet in her hand.
She raised it tremblingly, and broke the seal,
And read:

"To Monica from Augustine:
Greeting and health. Thy son is safe, though sad:
He fears that he has forfeited thy love:
It were but just: O mother, such a storm,
Yet nothing to the storm that broke in me,
When my ill deed, grown terrible, pursued,
And lashed me with a thousand furious tongues!
Thy trust: my broken word: canst thou forgive?
It happened thus: a wind rose, near the dawn,
Long waited for, and they would loose at once;
My chance, Maxentius called it; he and they
Persuaded me; I yielded; that was all;
All, yet enough; I had not planned it so,
When we stood there together on the shore.

But I will come again to thee some day,
Or thou to me. Canst thou forgive? Farewell."

She read the words twice over, for they seemed
To roll a great weight, somehow, from her heart.
"O Augustine," she murmured, "son of mine,
Hast thou not learned thy mother even yet?
'Forgive,' 'forgive,'—why, that is what it is
To be a mother." Then she wrote it out,
And wrote a hundred other things beside,
And sent the letter, with what speed she could,
By the first vessel sailing for The Mouths.

There came another letter from the North,
A few weeks afterwards, in which he spoke
Of prosperous beginnings, many friends,
Pupils abundant, and a growing fame.
Then letters crossed, and crossed again, the sea
'Twixt mother and son, like pigeons loosed in heaven
That beat their way through sun or cloud or wind
To some far goal, with love beneath their wings.
Months passed away, and then the word was this:
"They send for me to Mediolanum. Hast
Thou heard of Ambrose? He is bishop there;
Of some considerable weight, I judge,
In town as well as church. This Ambrose wants
A teacher, skilled in rhetoric, for the youth

Under his shepherding; he asked for names;
They gave him mine. The opening is good;
I shall consider it, and may go down."

"Ambrose," she said, repeating to herself
The name, as one who feels for a lost clew
In memory, "Ambrose, Ambrose, why, 'tis he,
The good man Marcia spoke of." And the thought
Shone like a ray of sunshine through her eyes.
Some days thereafter came a hurried line
To say that he was off, would write again
From Mediolanum when the time allowed;
Meanwhile farewell, with love; his hope was high.

Weeks passed; returning to her home one day
From visiting the sick child of a friend,
She found a bulky letter, newly brought.
It told the little happenings of his life
And such things as are prized of them we love.
But that which pleased her most in it was this:
"I visit the cathedral now and then
To hear the bishop, rhetoricians should;
He has the art of it; I tell thee what,
The people spread their ears out when he talks.
And yet he is no trickster, as I think,
No lank, wild-eyed and overholy saint,

No splitter of hairs and juggler with the truth,
No oily-mouthed emitter of fine speech,
No loud volcano of cinders, smoke and mud —
Varieties which I have sometimes found
At Rome and elsewhere — he is none of these,
But just a plain, whole-hearted, wholesome man,
Of ample girth of body and mind, who speaks
The truth straight out, — what he indeed calls truth
And holds truth in the bottom of his soul.
He speaks, then lets it work; and it does work;
The man has powerful influence hereabouts;
'Tis said the devil himself throws up the job
He may be working at when Ambrose comes."

And in his next he touched the theme again;
The theme was growing; that was plain enough:
"I wrote of Ambrose: yesterday I learned
What made him bishop; he was governor once;
And when Augentius died, and riots rose
Concerning a successor, Ambrose came
To the cathedral, where the people were,
To quell the storm by reason if he could.
He spake so well, that, when his words were done,
A child's voice, breaking on the stillness, said,
'Ambrose, thyself be bishop.' Thereupon
The people, thinking it a sign from heaven,
Cried, 'Ambrose, be thou bishop.' He at first

Was startled, saying it could never be;
Preposterous; he was not worthy; he,
Man of affairs, trained to the civil arm,
And more experienced in work than prayer,
Not leaving all things for the Lord to do.
But afterward, persuaded, he laid down
The governor's sword and took the bishop's staff;
Now like a shepherd goes before his flock.
And still he mingles work in with his prayers,
Says they were never meant to stay apart.
Religion is an all the time affair
With him; 'tis in the fibre and the blood;
Not like the toga some men make of it,
Who throw it lightly on and off again
According to the weather and the hour."

So in his next; 'twere possible to feel
That, underneath his seeming-trivial talk,
Some serious thought lay hidden, like a gem
Lost in a raked-o'er ash heap, by and by
To flash out suddenly and bring surprise:
"A powerful sermon yesterday; he preached
On retribution and the like of that;
The younger sinners aren't done squirming yet.
I stood it well; I generally do;
I go not for his doctrine but his art,
Or, rather, for that which takes the place of art;
Gain points for my profession. Such a voice!

I would my pupils could use theirs as well,
Sending it up and down the ladder of tones,
From earth to heaven, from heaven to earth again;
Roars like a bull, sings like a nightingale.
Then eye and hand — the whole man preaches so!
All very simple; and for one so trained!
Breaks every rule the rhetoricians teach.
'Tis strange, though, how his words take hold and cling,
Like arrows, some of them, with points and barbs.
Of course there is some truth in what he says —
I'll not deny it — and the truth has claws.
Not words; it is the man behind the words
That gives the truth its power to catch and hold.
Quintilian says that only a good man
Makes a good orator; Ambrose is both.
The man is good; therefore his words have weight.
And his interpretations always lean
Most heavily toward the side of common sense.
Well, as to doctrine, there are sin and grace,
Plenty of both, but rather more of sin
To start with; after, rather more of grace.
And life, life, life; he talks eternal life;
I like the sovereignty and love of God;
He gives it strong; there's something solid there;

The Resurrection, Holy Spirit, Heaven,
Considerable hell — I like it all;
I should, that is, if I believed it all."

These passages did Monica one day
Show to her bishop, and he bade her hope:
"I tell thee what I told thee long ago, —
This child of many prayers can not be lost;
Ambrose will make a Christian of him yet.
Ambrose has truth in him and lets it out
As doth a candle or a star its beams.
Truth humanized is more than truth alone:
Why, take God's dearest truth and draw it out
In flaming syllables across the sky,
To stare the world forever in the face,
And men, if they should see it, would not heed;
Or let the great lips of the thunder-cloud
Utter it, with the trembling of the hills,
And men, though hearing, would pass smiling on;
But take that same truth in a human life
That lives it, deed by deed, and day by day,
As Ambrose does — I say he lives the truth —
Then hath it power as nothing else on earth
To move and break us to a sense of God.
So much a man is better than a book!
Decrees of councils, creeds, hymns of the faith,
The blessed rolls of Holy Writing, — these
Are signs and voices; they are not the life;

And they are not the power; nothing without
The glorious line of witnesses whose hands,
Linking across the years, touch back to Christ.
His life comes to us down the living chain,
Life touching life and kindling it, as lamp
Doth lamp; so it hath been and so, I think,
It will be till the ending of the world."

She treasured up the comfort of these words,
And pondered on them far into the night.
When next the golden arrows of the East
Kindled the clouds, a little fire of hope
Burned in her heart; for, dimly traversing
The borderland 'twixt sleep and waking, she
Had caught the flying fragment of a dream:
A dove sped through the heavens from out the north,
And, pausing, circled round and round o'erhead;
Then fell as from its wing a silvery speck;
She watched the speck come spiraling down the air
Slowly, and glancing light, until it dropped
Soft as a snowflake at her very feet;
Picking it up, she saw it was a fold
Of paper, and it seemed all blank at first,
But presently she found three little words,
Written in red, the same the angel showed
Years back in her first trouble: "It is well."

So she awoke, and went about her cares,
And waited anxiously for what might come
With the next vessel from the Northern Seas.

The interval was long, so long she feared
Some evil import; but it came at last, —
His letter, telling her of many things,
Then passing, in a seeming-casual way,
To the old theme of Ambrose and the church,
As matters of less consequence by far,
And in his trivial-serious manner as before:
"I fell in with the bishop three days since,
Walking at sunset by the river brink.
We talked an hour; think, mother, what he said —
That I should be enrolled among the flock;
Would have me join the catechumens now!
Art thou not terrified? Thy son a saint,
With great eyes filled with glory to the brim,
And fearful sunbeams sprouting from his head!
Ambrose is wise in most things, not in all;
He takes to me, somehow; that warps his thought;
I rank below his estimation; why,
No river on earth can wash a black sheep white;
I said it to him, but he only smiled.
A catechumen — no great harm, perhaps;
I'm one already — was one long ago;

We rhetoricians catch at even the chance
Like that for knowledge; I might gain a point,
Pick up a crumb or two for my young men,
Learn further still — which is my main desire —
The man himself and sources of his power.
No miser of truth, he deals with it in large
And generous masses; not ground down, and filed
Away, and polished to a needle's point.
I like truth when it comes in flesh and blood,
And rounded out with simple common sense."

"What change has come to Monica?" they said
Who saw her on the morrow, "tidings again?"
They could not tell if tidings better or worse.
She seemed not glad or sad, but glad and sad
Together, as she went from place to place,
With some strong purpose sitting in her eyes.
She clomb the hill, and stood there looking long
On forest, meadow, town, blue sea and sky,
And down on her dear home; then tears welled up,
And land and sea and all swam off in mist.
That afternoon she plucked the last lone flower
Within her garden, saying, "Little tree,
Bear others still for other hands to pluck,"
And gave the rose to Cloelia, the sick child.
She prayed with aged Stephen in his home
As one who, almost any day or night,

Might put the crown on, and with Lucia too,
Kissing her cheek and bidding her hope on.
She made her rounds, bestowing light and love,
More tenderly the more the end seemed near,
And bade the suffering ones hold firm the faith,
Nor fear at all, whatever God might do.
Then calling in a trusted neighbor-friend,
She ran the cases over, name by name,
Explained what each one needed most, and said,
"Now, Maria, promise me — for thou dost bear
The blessedest of names in earth or heaven —
To care for them until I come again,
And care for them if I return no more."
And the kind Maria, weeping, promised all.

Upon the Lord's Day, when the Christians met,
One asked, "But where is Monica?" and one,
The trusted neighbor-friend, made answer, "Gone."
"Gone whither?" "Over the sea to Augustine."
And heavily fell the loss on all their hearts.
When reading that last letter, she had said,
"The path lies yonder; I must go to him."
For duty always seemed to her a star
That moved this way or that to lead her on;
Now it moved northward; therefore she arose,
Bade quick farewells and bravely followed it.

That was indeed a memorable voyage;
The light wind barely blew them from the port,
Then died away; the sailors took their oars
And evenly smote with them the shining plains,
Marking the time with snatches of old songs.
The wind sprang up again and oars were shipped;
It blew so strong and long that now it made
Great rollers, over which the white ship flew,
Bending and bowing, and with all sail set,
Glad in the glory of the purple seas.
The sun dropped and the Pilot Stars came out;
All night the wind pushed steadily at the stern;
At dawn it veered; they reefed and tacked a while;
By noon 'twas boisterous, and the mast came down:
At the world's end a cloud thrust up its head
And mighty shoulders, like a monster black
From the abyss, and grew; it raised an arm
Slowly and dragged the sun into the gulfs;
Then bellowing through the heavens in the dark,
And loosing the swift fires, all twisted round
With strands of rain, came tramping the great deep
With fearful footstep toward the lonely ship.
Alarm fell on the faces of the crew;
Heart melted in them; all their hope was gone.
Lo, then the woman in her majesty
Rose, full of strength, calm with the calm of God,

Her face seen in the flashes from the cloud,
Her voice heard in the pauses of the blast,
And spoke great words of courage: was not He,
Who made the elements and gave them power,
Still lord of whatsoever He had made?
And had He not, in visible form, himself
Once walked the waves and hushed them by a word?
Ay, entered into ships and saved men's souls,
That those in peril might thereafter know
He was not far from any one of them?
Let them not fear; no demon out of hell
Could for a moment bear one look of Christ.
Herself had heard his voice pass to and fro
And very near, in perilous hours like this:
Her prayer would bring Him; therefore had she prayed.
While thus she spoke, those rough men of the sea
Were moved in heart, listening, and marveling much
What manner of Presence might be there, until
Their awe of her was more than of the storm.
Hope came again; they put forth all their strength;
The tumult fell and passed by slow degrees;
And three days afterwards they brought the ship
Unto the country whither they would go.

Meanwhile — not knowing as yet what mighty Hand
Shaped his affairs, nor how the invisible threads
Of circumstance are woven round our lives
To bind them where God wills, and as God wills,
Into some larger purpose for mankind —
That lover of truth and knowledge, Augustine,
Held steadily to the work of his own choice.
Six days he taught and studied; the Lord's day
Was given to the cathedral and his friends;
But hunger and thirst raged ever in his soul;
He climbed to heaven, descended into hell,
In search of his Desire, and found it not;
At times a truth flashed in and flashed away;
And often, as he sat and dreamed alone,
There gathered in the shadow one sad face,
With sweet sad eyes that looked their sadness full
On him, and followed if he chanced to move:
Then tears filled his own eyes, his head dropped down,
And he would find himself a child again.
"Hast thou a mother?" Ambrose asked him once:
"I have," he answered, "and she prays o'ermuch."
"Ah," cried the bishop, "now I understand;
She prays for thee; that makes the devil fear.
My son, the devil is great in argument,
And great in quoting from the Holy Word,

And great in manner when that serves his aim:
A mighty gentleman the devil is;
But little enough beside an honest life,
And weak enough if truth strikes on his path,
And nothing at all against a mother's prayer.
I say he will not pluck thee from us yet."

That day, toward evening, came a sudden knock
Upon his door, and the maid Miriam called,
"Some one to see thee." He arose straightway
And opened, wondering; there the stranger stood
Who was no stranger; could it be a dream?
"My son," cried Monica, and at the word
They fell with tears into each other's arms.
It was a day of gladness for them both;
Each asked and told innumerable things;
But spoke not of what most was on her heart;
"I will not ask," she thought, "but pray and wait."
So Monica remained and kept the home,
Made friends among the people, served the church,
Grew steadily in usefulness and power,
Till all who saw her, wheresoe'er she went,
Loved her and followed her with reverent eyes,
As though she were an angel. Ambrose, too,
Learned speedily of her worth, and now and then
They sat and talked together on high themes.

One Lord's Day, when the bishop pressed the truth
Home mightily, and the atmosphere was filled
With energy of spirit, Augustine,
Feeling a great wave gather in his soul,
Slipped quietly away to be alone.
There in the garden, underneath the trees,
He found Alypius, friend of many years;
But both were silent mostly; then he went
Still farther 'mid the shadows of the grove,
Until he heard a little smothered voice,
Or thought he heard, as of a little brook
Soft-stepping seaward over mossy stones.
There was no brook, and presently the voice,
Changing, arose from somewhere in himself;
It bore a trouble in it, and it seemed
Crying ever upward into articulate speech,
While none but Augustine could hear the cry:

"O ships of light, that sail the empty blue
And still with beautiful light our paths bestrew,
The light I seek I find not now in you.

"O life, that soundest round about my door
And throbbest through the world forevermore,
The cup I yearn for is not thine to pour.

"Vain shines the light that as mere light is known;
Life without love in it is dead like stone;
What makes light light, life life, is love alone.

"Then where is love, that I dear love's commands
May keep forever? By thy side He stands,
The Light, Life, Love, — Lord of the Piercèd Hands."

It ceased; and vanities and pleasures, all
His ancient mistresses, now plucked at him,
And whispered softly, "Dost thou cast us off?"
Moved this way and moved that, as if a ball
Tossed by the wanton hands of circumstance,
He groaned: "Who drives me hither and thither? What
I would, I do not; what I would not do,
That do I, and I find no peace on earth;
Am I, or is immovable fate, the king?"
Pausing, he gave one steadfast honest look
Into his heart, then cried: "I am the king;
Or was, or might have been, or may be yet;
To choose, to choose — the terrible power is mine;
Not fate's; not as the Manichaeans say;
'Tis I that will or nill, I, I myself."
Thus would he grasp the kingship of his soul,
Shamed for his wanderings, like some wayward prince
Found creeping back to an abandoned throne.
"What then to do?" he cried; "what then to do!"
Lo, from a neighboring house beyond the grove,

Where some one sang, a boy or girl, perhaps,
There floated in upon him through the trees
The song's refrain: "Take up and read," it ran,
"Take up and read." The omen was not lost;
He took the volume of the blessed Paul,
And, opening wheresoe'er his fingers chanced,
Read, "Not in rioting and drunkenness,"
And, "Not in chambering and wantonness,"
And, "Put ye on the Lord, even Jesus Christ;"
Whereat the truth, as never before to him,
Broke like a meteor loosed across the sky,
And did not like a meteor pass away,
But stayed and grew and made a glorious hope.
He found Alypius and told him all;
And, lo, Alypius in that selfsame hour,
Touched by the invisible finger of God's grace,
Hoped also, and the twain rejoiced in hope.

They lingered in the garden till the night
Wrapped all things in its silence, and the dusk
Was silvered over with the holy stars.
Then they arose and sought out Monica.
"Mother," began the child of many prayers,
"Once, parting from thee by the evening sea,
I said — dost thou remember? — 'Till the dawn.'
O thou hast seen a thousand dawns since then
Stretch up their great white shining wings in
heaven,

Cherubimwise, and pass, and perish; still
I came not back; I say it to my shame;
I left an empty promise in thy hands.
And yet not wholly empty; God is good;
His kindlier power, and greater than my poor
Weak will, has turned my falsehood into truth;
There is a dawn that breaks in human souls;
No man can foreknow surely when or how;
Of light more beautiful than that which clings
To sunrise cloud, or star, or angel's face;
For 'tis ordained of the eternal God
That truth's great splendid orb, when that rolls near
And shines o'er the horizon of men's lives,
Should bring a day immortal like his own;
That golden dawn has broken in my soul;
And I am here to meet thee by a sea
Of vaster reach than e'er I dreamed of then;
Doubts that have hung as clouds through all these years
Black masses piled against the gates of day,
Are gone, or, smitten through with that fair light,
Are changed to clouds of glory; all are changed;
And I am changed; I am of those at last
Who wait the dear Lord's coming and believe."
He paused a moment and then added this:
"Alypius too; the dawn broke for us both."

And so there came to Monica that day
The unwonted burden of a mighty joy.
She staggered under it; she wept; she cried
Her gratitude in broken bits of prayer.
And afterward the three in calmer mood
Sat far into the silent hours and talked;
And when they separated, in their hearts
Heard songs and happy voices all night long.

. . . . . .

I loved thee late, dear Lord, I loved thee late:
My years ran waste, but thou didst love and wait;
Thou hast been very patient with my sin.

Thou wert within, dear Lord; I was without;
I sought thee there, and round and round about;
I found thee not because thou wert within.

Thou wert with me, and I was not with thee;
Thy beam shone on my path; I did not see;
Thy voice was loud, and yet I did not hear.

I hungered and I thirsted after truth,
And ranged the world through all my faultful youth;
I sought thee far, and thou wert very near.

Stars for the sky, for heaven thy glorious throne,
But as thou madest for thyself alone;
Our hearts are restless till they rest in thee.

O late, so late! But all is overpast,
And peace is come, though late; thy peace at last;
I am with thee, as thou, dear Lord, with me.

## Part IV

The change in him wrought other changes now;
All things were new; far down the future stretched
A realm of golden service. "Let me serve,"
Cried Augustine, "the Master and the church.
Life that is life is ever more and more;
And life is service — thought and word and deed.
I was — 'tis what I rose from and keep down;
I am — it is so only by God's grace;
I shall be — lo, there shines the mountain-top!
'Was,' 'am' and 'shall be,' — are not these, when known,
Three lamps along the roadway of the soul?
Three voices crying courage as we climb?
And, in the end, three holies of approach
Whereby this world is terraced up to God?
He that aspires will serve and has the life."
Henceforth the currents of his being all
Set outward — toward truth's infinite sea, whose tides,
With shining folds, encircle the Isles of Life.

When now the year, ebbing through autumn skies,
Brought near the vintage season, he would flee
The city's tumult, taking Monica,
To him the dearest of all souls on earth,

Navigius, his brother, who had come,
Alypius, friend and brother of his soul,
And Adeodatus, the boy he loved;
With these he sought the quiet of the hills,
To rest a while and gather inward strength;
And in a villa loaned him by a friend,
They dwelt, communing with themselves and God.
They watched the days come in and cross the world —
The mornings glorious on the silent heights,
The evenings lighted out with crimson fires —
And drank of spiritual fountains; O,
The visions and the conversations there!
Six months they tarried, then returned again
To Mediolanum, since the time drew on
When they who purposed it should be baptized

So the Great Week, with all its solemn hours
And mighty memories, came upon the world;
It sent a hush through every Christian heart,
As when the night, behind the dying sun,
Comes stilling the loud voice of trade and toil,
And brings out silently the stars of God.
The holy time wrought mightily in the heart
Of Augustine; he followed, step by step,
Through those great days, the blessed Master's feet;
Lived every act as Peter had or John, —

The waving Palms, the benison of Farewell,
The Garden and the Trial and the Cross;
And, when the stone was rolled against the Tomb,
And that last day of doubt and waiting seemed
A pall for heaviness, he cried aloud:
"O Christ, why art thou gone into the dark?
Have I not loved thee? when the soldiers mocked,
Did I not suffer? when the nails and spear
Tore thy dear flesh, did I not feel the pain?
Have I not followed thee from spot to spot?
And must I, at this barrier where men pause,
Pause also, while thou goest on alone?
Lo, I would follow thee from world to world,
And whithersoever; walk with thee in hell,
Ay, sit among the damnèd souls themselves,
To see thy face and hear thy words again;
For hell with all its torments were not hell,
While thou art there, but heaven enough for me."

That night they kept the vigils in the church
With prayer and many a hymn and some good word
From Ambrose and long silent intervals
Wherein they thought, "What if he come to-night!"
Remembering what has long been handed down,
That when the Lord shall come to judge mankind
'Twill be on Easter eve. None knew how near

Or far that hour; they listened tremblingly
As if to hear the terrible trumpet blow.
At midnight all the company arose,
Passed out, and, others joining from the town,
Each with a burning lamp, marched three times round
The building with a solemn step; then all
Reëntered, knelt, and waited for the dawn.
And when the herald, posted at the door,
Proclaimed, through all the stillness of the house,
"He rises!" lo, a thousand voices broke
In unison; their hymn beat gloriously
From floor to roof, from side to side, and shook
The prophets and apostles on the walls.

The long night vanished, taking all her stars,
And, as she went, drew up from the great deep
Behind her, and across the sky, a cloud
That trailed the land o'er with its fringe of rain
And veiled the breaking of that Easter Day.
But Monica and Augustine beheld
Another light, which never cloud can quench
Or dim —unless the cloud of unbelief;
The Resurrection light shone like the sun;
It glimmered in men's faces when they met,
Saluting one another, on the street:
"The Lord is risen," "The Lord is risen indeed!"
The third hour and the rain had all passed by,

Though not the cloud, when streamed the people
forth
Toward the green river-marge; beneath it rolled
The happy wave that bore their sins away.
The neophytes assembled in the church,
And, two by two, marched singing to the place.
Their voices far off sounded like the trees
When played on by the fingers of the wind,
Then, nearer, full of sweetness, and then like
The voices from another land, as if
A chorus of strong angels walked the earth.

. . . . . .

And who are these that walk in long array,
And walk with happy faces? These are they
That follow — follow through the vales below
And up the steeps, in sun or rain or snow,
Follow the Lamb, and follow night and day,
Whithersoever he points out the way —
Whithersoever.

The way is long, the way is rough and blind;
They do not fear, because the Lamb is kind,
And goes before them, and will ever go,
To break the path for them that love him so.
O, strong the bond that heart to heart doth bind!
They follow after him, and do not mind
Whithersoever.

They follow, though he wears no crown or star;
He wears no crown, and yet he wears a scar, —

O, more than any crown to those who know!
They ask not if there be a goal, for, lo,
It is enough that where he is they are;
Therefore they follow him however far,
And whithersoever.

They do not ask; they follow and are wise;
But soon or late will float before their eyes
Visions of far-off beautiful things that show
In fairer light than star or sunset glow;
And they at last shall know, with glad surprise,
What meaning in that word he gives them lies —
That 'whithersoever.'

. . . . . .

One after one they passed into the wave,
Were buried, and arose forevermore.
The last was Augustine; it happened so;
But so he wished it; he felt humble now;
And last and least; they knew the man he was,
How keen of intellect, accomplished, strong;
Knew how his tongue had lashed at mother church,
And with what power; the glances of all eyes
Were on him; Monica's o'erflowed with tears;
And also his; it was a glorious hour.
He passed into the wave, and all that load
Of the accumulated sins of years —
Unfaith and blasphemy and wantonness —
Rolled from him and rolled seaward and was gone.
Never did Ambrose speak so tenderly

The words, "Thee I baptize into the name
Of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

And now
A strange thing happened; surely it was strange:
As they ascended slowly from the stream,
That league-long leaden fold of cloud, which hid
The awful jewel of the orient's gate,
Brake, letting the swift splendor fall,
And, through the rent of jagged gold and pearl,
It spread a glory upon every face.
Then came the wonder, for their hearts were full:
With sudden inspiration Ambrose cried,
"O God, we praise thee, we acknowledge thee
To be the Lord," and Augustine in turn
Responded, "All the earth doth worship thee,
The Father everlasting." Then the voices twain,
Each answering each with melody as sweet
As ever rose from this poor earth to God,
Sang, and sang on, while none dared speak or stir;
They sang, and ceased not, till to heaven so,
Line upon line and golden phrase on phrase,
They builded the imperishable hymn.

Then came a silence and bowed heads and prayers;
And then the neophytes, each with a robe
That glistened like an angel's, and with hearts
Burning within them as they went, marched back,

Singing, until their voices were as trees,
When played o'er by the fingers of the wind,
And slowly in the distance died away.

. . . . . .

The shadow moves, nor turneth back,
Upon the silent dial's track:
And thou, O Lord, wouldst have us be
About our Father's work like thee.

Thyself, dear Lord, wilt be the stay
Of each upon his separate way;
We know that in thy hand and time
The feeblest effort grows sublime.

And we remember evermore
Thy blessed feet have gone before;
Whatever questionings there be,
The answer still is, — Follow me.

Yea, Master, let us follow; lead,
And let us follow, word and deed;
'Twill be our joy, till time is gone,
To follow where thou leadest on.

. . . . . .

One after one had Augustine dropped off
His pupils, and with gracious tact; "I must
To Africa," he said; "there lies my work;
'Tis calling for me." In the quiet end
Of summer he began his journey south,
Passed towns and villages, with brief delay,

To Rome, the ancient mother of them all.
His friends went with him — Monica and the rest.
The City, on her seven-fold throne of hills,
Casting the shadow of a mighty name;
Rome, where the glorious ladder of the skies,
Once rested long for sake of those sweet souls
Who dared the blood and flame around its foot
To win the life far up where pain is done;
Rome, hallowed by the Bearers of the Sword
And of the Keys, who nobly led that host
Of blessed martyr-feet from earth to God, —
This mighty Rome wrought on them like a spell.
Five days they tarried, on the sixth they took
The road to Ostia, issuing through the gate
Of holy memories — named of blessèd Paul —
Hard by the pyramid — and soon beheld
The sea that lay rolled off against the sky
Like a vast floor of silver in the sun.

'Twas evening when they reached the busy port,
Found lodgings with an ancient friend, and learned
The ship they looked for was not yet arrived.
So they must wait, and little did they dream
What things momentous from the folds of time,
In those brief days, would fall and meet them there.
To Monica and Augustine, the hours,

Like white-winged ships from some mysterious deep,
Came freighted with rich memories and great hopes,
And with new revelations of God's will.

They sat one evening, mother and son, within
The pleasant garden window, looking out
On flowers and trees, blue waves, and the blue sky.
They spoke together of God's marvelous works,
And wonder what the blessèd life must be
With him in his own home where dwell the saints;
While speaking thus, they mounted up in thought
And ardent longing toward that holy place;
They felt immortal rapture, as their hearts
Drank the inflowings of God's life and love;
They wandered, step by step, through all the heavens
Whence sun and moon and stars beam down on earth;
And higher yet, as with invisible wings,
They rose, to reach that fulness inexhaust,
Where the Great Shepherd doth his Israel feed
In pastures of eternal truth and life.
And Augustine exclaimed, when first his heart
Found utterance: "If the tumult of the flesh
Were silent; if the images of earth

And sea and air were silent; if the poles
Were silent; if the very soul itself,
Transcending its own thoughts, were silent too,
With dream and every speech and sign; if all
Were silent, and the listening ear could hear
Him who created all speak his own word,
Not through a tongue of flesh, or angel's voice,
Or thunder's roar, but from himself alone,
Until, upborne in spirit, we might touch
The eternal truth which lies beyond all these;
And if this contemplation, undisturbed
By other vision, should endure, and wrap
The glory of a life like that around
The soul forever, — then would that sweet saying,
'Enter into thy Lord's joy,' be fulfilled! "

Whereat cried Monica, " My son, my son,
What has befallen thy mother? Speak no more;
Thy words are glorious; speak not, lest I die:
For they have rapt me into realms afar
I knew not of, and earth has lost its charms."
Then after a brief pause continued thus:
" My life hath had it troubles; like the cloud
That used to make me tremble in my dream,
They all are gone, the evening sky is clear.
My prayer is answered; thou art in the church;
My life-work done, why should I longer stay? "

Perhaps she felt some premonition then
Of what would shortly happen; I know not:
But eye and ear are quickened, it is said,
When near the boundaries of world and world,
And may perceive things only meant for those
Who are about to enter and see God.
Some evenings after this, they fell again
Discussing the old theme, when, floating through
The open window with the breath of flowers,
Came low sweet strains; the daughter of the house
Had taken her lute, and, in a garden bower,
Was practicing a song which she had learned,
They said, of Ambrose, but I do not know.

. . . . . .

The shadow falls, the path I can not trace;
  Fear not, my heart, if only faith abide;
If faith abide thou conquerest time and place:
Some day, somewhere, thou shalt behold His face:
  O yearning heart, thou shalt be satisfied.

The shadow falls: the shadow can not stay:
  Hope on, pray on, thou wilt not be denied:
Over the burnt-out embers of today
The golden morrow rises, and alway
  The promise stands — thou shalt be satisfied.

I can not say to what far land I go,
  When I embark upon the foamless tide;
Or if I find the things I yearn for so,
Ever at all, O heart, I do not know:
  I only know thou shalt be satisfied.

I follow, moving toward the deep and vast,
I follow hope, my star and faithful guide:
I shall rejoice in trials overpast,
And see that Face, O heart of mine, at last,
In whose dear look thou shalt be satisfied.

. . . . . .

"A tender song," said Monica, "it strikes
A chord in my own spirit, bringing back
My last night's dream, in which I stood alone
Upon the margin of a great strange sea,
Watching the place where all the days go down.
Over the waters, as I looked, the sun
Threw a long bridge of silver, whereon walked
A myriad shining forms with glittering feet;
And in the sun I saw a beckoning arm;
Then came a ship, with snowy cloud of sail,
And took me on, and bore me far away.
The shore rolled back, isle after isle was dropped,
As sped the ship fearless between the hands
Of two almighty forces — Water and Air —
Which, if they would, might close and crush the world.
They bare us up and on; and still the sun
Seemed ever setting, yet he went not down;
Then some one said, 'Things here bear other names
Than men have given them in the land behind:

The end is the beginning, death is life.'
And more and more the sun rained forth his beams
In splendid shower on air and sea and sail;
The wave shone crystal to the very sands;
Soon, straight before, so swiftly flew our ship,
We saw a broken sky-line and caught sight
Of amethystine hills, their myriad slopes
Beating the light back in ten thousand ways;
And, in a purple hollow of the coast,
A gleaming line wound round and through the hills,
Veinlike; it rose into a mighty wall,
As we drew near, built in with precious stones —
Sapphire, chalcedony, sardonyx, topaz — all
So precious that they drank great draughts of light,
And one might look in them as in a book.
Beyond, what seemed as towers and palaces
Of beauty lifted up their golden fires,
Palace on palace, tower o'ertopping tower,
In far receding terraces of gold.
Then, deep down in the water under me,
I heard a low strange note, which grew and grew,
And spread through the vast sea, and through the air
Till sea and air seemed everywhere alive
With music; it was sweet and full of awe;
And straightway such a sense of peace and joy

Possessed my frame as I had never known.
They told me not my vessel's name or port.
But, Augustine, it was a trivial thing
That made it all, — a little light and sound:
When I awoke, the neighboring matin bell
Was ringing, and the sun was in my face.
Such marvels lie wrapped up in common things
That all we need is better eyes and ears
To find both God and heaven in every place.
My son, I think the hour is waxing late."

The landscape and the levels of the deep
Lay in the moonlight like a dream that night;
The stars wheeled noiseless round the pole; the sky
Was beautiful. But midnight brought a change;
There came a moaning in the sea, which grew
To a great voice of pain and shook the air,
Making the waves pound loudly on the sand;
The trees in wood and garden swung their arms
And cried together; all the world did seem
Astir with trouble, for the storm was on.
Three hours it roared, then slowly died away,
Drawn inland by the spirit of the hills.
But with the storm came that which did not pass —
The fever; Monica lay within its grasp.
At dawn she called us, bidding us not fear,
But wait in patience for what God might do.

The next day, and the next, and seven days more,
The fever gained and fed upon her life.
We watched it as men sometimes watch a flame
Creep slowly up a tall and beautiful tower,
Knowing the issue, without power to help.
I think she felt what must be from the first.

The day when Adeodatus, the boy,
Rushed breathless in, crying, "The ship has come,"
She turned to Augustine, and said, "My son,
When sails the ship, go back to thy own land
As thou hast purposed; they have need of thee:
Another ship bears me to other shores."
His great heart heaved within him at these words,
But still he held the tears back for her sake,
And answered: "I have been a wayward son,
And thou as God's sweet angel; do not go,
O mother, I can never let thee go,
Till thou hast found me worthier; we must sail
Together; I have prayed the blessèd Christ."
Whereat, she, smiling faintly, made reply:
"Once — dost thou not remember? — once I prayed,
In the small chapel on the Afric shore,
All night, with tears — the blessèd Christ knows all —
Prayed that the waiting ship there might not sail;

And yet the ship sailed, bearing thee away;
I thought to ruin, and my heart seemed crushed,
Not knowing 'twas in the very plan of God
The ship should bear thee to the arms of Christ.
My prayer was answered, and I knew it not.
And prayer is always answered, though ofttimes,
In ignorance, we frame our wish so ill,
We gain our ends by losing what we ask.
Prayer is not taking God's hand to lead him,
But to be led of him, since he sees best
What would be asked for if we only knew.
For all prayer springs from one deep root of faith
In the dear Father's wisdom, love, and power,
And means this only — let his will be done.
Wait, then, my son, and see what God will do."

She ceased, but shortly after spoke again
To both her sons, "Bury your mother here."
And when Navigius, weeping, called it hard
To die and to be buried there afar
From home and friends, she answered, "Say not so;
Nor be disquieted; bury my body here,
Or anywhere; no place is far from God.
But this I ask, that you, where'er you are,
At the Lord's altar will remember me."

These were her words. More violently now
The fever wrenched and wasted her; and yet,
Whene'er she spoke she strove to comfort us.

But came the day when all her strength seemed gone,
And she was silent, save a word or two,
Uttered at intervals, and indistinct,
And save that which she said at eventide,
As to herself, half murmuring: "Tomorrow —
Tomorrow — yes — tomorrow I shall go."
Upon the morrow, as the time approached
The fourth hour, and we saw the end was near,
She started suddenly, looked into space,
Exclaiming, in glad voice, "My dream, my dream!"
Then quietly sank back and spoke no more.
That was the moment when the strange light fell
From overhead and played upon her face.
It lingered full three minutes; then it passed,
And with it passed a great and noble soul.

The third day, as the sun was going down,
Praying and grieving much we buried her,
In that same garden fronting on the sea,
Where voices of the trees and of the sea
Will sing forever round her place of sleep,
Close by the wall upon the southern slope,

Between the pine and oak — not far from God.
And, as with many a tear we turned away,
Lo, through the folds of those rich curtains, wrought
Of shimmering purples in the heavenly looms
And hung at evening round this world of ours,
There timidly peered the sweet face of a star,
As if she, whom he loved so on this earth,
Looked back to see how fared it with her own.

That night we talked together many things,
But chiefly of her life and great reward,
The next day clasped each other's hands
And parted, sorrowing; that was long ago.

I never after saw the man I loved
As I had loved none else; great Christian, son
Of such a mother. All the world knows how
He bare her spirit with him evermore,
In his own country, in his home and hers;
Alone, yet not alone; for she was there,
And moved before him like a happy star,
And shone around him like a holy light,
And spoke within him like a blessed voice.
He made that spirit ruler of his own,
And wrought with it — he could not otherwise —
A mighty work; taught, comforted the poor,
As she had done; prayed, preached, and fought,

Winning a hundred battles for the church,
And helping to build the City of God on earth.
He made the dream of Monica come true.

Now he is gone; the boy died long before;
The others in their turn throughout the years;
And Ambrose — I beheld the blessed man,
Dead, seated in his chair within the church,
The little silver star above his head —
That Easter when my brother was baptized —
Then saw him borne to burial; all are gone.
I too shall go; tomorrow, it may be;
Today, perhaps; it does not matter now;
For this, methinks, is my last task; I wait
His coming, and am ready; Christ be praised.
Here ends the little chronicle. *Farewell.*

. . . . . .

They come and go, as stars that shine and fade
To shine again although in unseen skies!
Yea, more than stars: the light their presence laid
On this poor earth is fadeless to our eyes.

Love can not fade; perpetual, night and day,
The lamp burns they have lighted in the heart, —
These generous souls that use the Master's way
In doing good, and ever bear their part,

And take the ill that comes to them, and so,
Little by little, for a little spell,
Unfold to us their beauty; then they go,
And in their going say that all is well.

There is a whence and whither of all love,
All sacrifice, all light that shines abroad:
Comes love of hate? Or is the source above
In other Love? Why ask if there be God,

We that behold these angels everywhere
Descending and ascending, and might trace
Within the cloud that crowns the sacred stair
Of human life, our heavenly Father's face!

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